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## In Hindsight

Christopher Moznette

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**Your experience during COVID-19:**

In Hindsight

Date: 10/22/2021

One year, 11 months after the identification of Patient Zero

One year, nine months after arriving in the United States

It's odd remembering that almost two years ago I was sitting in my communications class joking about how some random person in Wuhan decided to eat a bat and got sick because of it. At first it was funny (hysterical given the pure oddity of the headline surely) but it seemed that with each coming day, the dawning feeling of this pandemic grew even bolder. Not a week after the initial finding of patient zero, there was an announcement in China warning of this growing disease, and to stay cautious, washing your hands (this really shouldn't have been needed to be said) and keeping your distance from those with symptoms listed on every news station. But at this point, those of the world who resided outside of China were living our lives "normally" (whatever that means) without hardly a second thought outside of "sucks for them".

It's odd, typing the word normal in hindsight after all that's happened. All these months of masks and social distancing and hearing the phrase "unprecedented times" an ungodly amount, the abnormal has become the subconscious normal. But I'm ahead of myself.

A month and a half later or so (the pandemic destroyed my sense of time), the United States reported its very first case in Seattle (not very surprising). Millions upon millions of Americans uttered a unified "Oh boy" when this news, like the virus, spread. China and its surrounding countries had gotten notably worse, reporting thousands of deaths at this point and now this deadly virus had entered the powerful, impenetrable, United States of America. Surely our superior forces and intellectual prowess would stop this virus here and now, stopping this Black Plague sequel in its tracks. Surely, this would be a "blink and you'll miss it" moment in American history, hardly a speck on the average Americans radar because, quite frankly, there was no way it would...no... *could* get worse. Not here the United States of America of all places.

But, and for some appalling reason, to everyone's utter surprise the virus spread and spread *and spread* until millions of Americans fell victim to the virus. Many Americans tragically lost their lives while others were able to come back from it scarred, and hearing about all these cases and stories from people directly affected by this foreign virus was honestly internally frightening. I never physically showed this, how could I? How would my bold and fearless peers react to me being scared of something that had little chance of even getting to me? At the time this idea often scared me more than the virus, but given that this whole pandemic taught everyone something, I too, learned a lesson. They were scared too, acting the same as I was, the same thought process going through their minds. "I should be okay... but what if I'm not?"

Mask mandate.

That probably either angered you or made you roll your eyes. Or perhaps... you didn't think much of it because you've been following it for well over a year at this point, bar the one month of freedom we had over here in Spokane. It was odd hearing about the mask mandate for the first time. It was also odd having to buy a mask for the first time, I wasn't used to having to wear something over my mouth, especially inside while I was working as an "essential worker", or as the Albertsons-Safeway company called me, a "hero". With a mask hiding my face I was a hero to the people, filling fruit and vegetables in a grocery store just so I could go home and spend my money on food and increased tuition (did I say that out loud?). Sarcasm aside, it was an odd experience, working in this huge grocery store that could only allow one hundred or so people in at a time, not that people wanted to follow that rule. Not following rules and mandates was a very common occurrence moving forward and I wish I could say it had gotten better in the time I'm writing this, but it was cause for some very entertaining arguments and fights to watch while I, the hero of the store, was organizing apples on a table. Through my laborious, heroic work of stocking food on a table I did receive a much appreciated "hazard pay" for my apparent troubles, though I liked to call it "hero pay" like other places were calling it, because of course I did.

There's not a lot else to discuss concerning working because everyday was exactly the same because there was hardly anything else you could do outside of being at home and going to the store. You could go on hikes, I guess, or do socially acceptable parking lot meet-ups, which proved to be very helpful in tending to my own personal social life. Though, it was annoying when going to give your friend a hug before you take off and some really awesome lady starts yelling at you for being the reason people are dying every day.

But for something that everyone who was at Eastern is aware of and either openly despises or found refreshing (I can't imagine); online classes. I'd never taken one, and I was a little excited to take one for the first time because of that reason. But it quickly became old after the zoom meetings started to become tiring.

"Can you hear me?"

"Can you turn your video on?"

"You're muted."

"I hate this."

"Time for breakout groups."

"This is weird isn't it?"

"Wow, Covid am I right?"

I have shivers just typing these phrases out, and I hope you did too. To those who somehow enjoy online classes, that's incredible and I envy you. For those who never want to see a computer screen again, especially with zoom open, I hope you're able to regain your sanity here soon.

But Covid-19 was more than just a deadly virus that tested basically all of humanity. It was a teacher and a mind-opening experience for many, including myself. It tested us in funny ways, making us participate in the age-old "how long can you last in a room with your family for an undisclosed amount of time" game (which was unwinnable) and tested how long we could go without going to Red Robin.

But the pandemic also taught us some crucial things that people will carry with them for years to come. After being in a world-spanning plague that toppled every degree of normalcy that the world had held for a time, you start to not take so many things for granted. Everything... even people... aren't going to last forever, so if anything's going to push you to take control of the life you have, making the best of every moment you experience, it's going to be a global pandemic.

In hindsight, as much as I never want to wear a mask again and wish Spokane hadn't teased me with not having to wear one for a whole month, Covid-19 helped me realize a lot of things about myself and the world around me. Things that will likely change how I see the world from here on out and how I'll continue to live my life. Don't get me wrong though, Covid is atrocious and I hope to never have to deal with this again, but people tend to learn things through the most unusual means, and this whole experience was no exception.

Here's to the complete and utter eradication of Covid the minute 2022 starts,  
Chris Moznette, hero of Safeway, menace of masks